

WE CLAIM:

1. A method of tucking a pair of opposing side panels into a body portion of a pant-like garment, the body portion including a front panel and a back panel, the method comprising the steps of:

positioning the body portion of the pant-like garment between two stacker finger units;

applying a vacuum through at least one finger on each of the stacker finger units to maintain the pant-like garment against the at least one finger;

increasing a distance between the two stacker finger units to pull the front panel of the pant-like garment away from the back panel of the pant-like garment;

pushing the opposing side panels into the body portion a distance toward one another; and

decreasing the distance between the two stacker finger units.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein a mechanical device is used to push the opposing side panels into the body portion.

3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the mechanical device comprises two opposing assemblies, each assembly including a plurality of paddles attached to a rotating carrier.

4. The method of Claim 3, wherein the mechanical device further comprises a cam track around which the carrier passes.

5. The method of Claim 3, wherein the mechanical device further comprises a cam track around which the plurality of paddles passes.

6. The method of Claim 2, wherein the mechanical device comprises a blade tucker.

7. The method of Claim 2, wherein the distance the opposing side panels are pushed into the body portion toward one another is adjusted by adjusting the mechanical device.

8. The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one fluid stream is used to push the opposing side panels into the body portion.

9. The method of Claim 8, wherein the at least one fluid stream comprises a pair of opposing air blasts.

10. The method of Claim 8, wherein the at least one fluid stream comprises a vacuum.

11. The method of Claim 8, wherein the distance the opposing side panels are pushed into the body portion toward one another is adjusted by adjusting the at least one fluid stream.

12. The method of Claim 1, wherein the distance the opposing side panels are pushed into the body portion toward one another is adjusted by adjusting the distance between the two stacker finger units.

13. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of exposing the pant-like garment to a sufficient amount of heat to activate heat-activatable elastomeric material while the front panel of the pant-like garment is pulled away from the back panel of the pant-like garment.

14. A method of tucking a pair of opposing side panels into a body portion of a pant-like garment, the body portion including a front panel and a back panel, the method comprising the steps of:

positioning the body portion of the pant-like garment between two stacker finger units;

applying a vacuum through at least one finger on each of the stacker finger units to maintain the pant-like garment against the at least one finger;

increasing a distance between the two stacker finger units to pull the front panel of the pant-like garment away from the back panel of the pant-

like garment;

pushing the opposing side panels into the body portion a first distance toward one another;

pushing the opposing side panels into the body portion a second distance toward one another, the second distance being greater than the first distance; and

decreasing the distance between the two stacker finger units.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein a mechanical device is used to push the opposing side panels into the body portion the first distance.

16. The method of Claim 15, wherein the mechanical device comprises two opposing assemblies, each assembly including a plurality of paddles attached to a rotating carrier.

17. The method of Claim 15, wherein the mechanical device comprises a blade tucker.

18. The method of Claim 14, wherein a mechanical device is used to push the opposing side panels into the body portion the second distance.

19. The method of Claim 18, wherein the mechanical device comprises two opposing assemblies, each assembly including a plurality of paddles attached to a rotating carrier.

20. The method of Claim 18, wherein the mechanical device comprises a blade tucker.

21. The method of Claim 14, wherein at least one fluid stream is used to push the opposing side panels into the body portion the first distance.

22. The method of Claim 21, wherein the at least one fluid stream comprises a pair of opposing air blasts.

23. The method of Claim 21, wherein the at least one fluid stream comprises a vacuum.

24. The method of Claim 14, wherein at least one fluid stream is used to push the opposing side panels into the body portion the second distance.

25. The method of Claim 24, wherein the at least one fluid stream comprises a pair of opposing air blasts.

26. The method of Claim 24, wherein the at least one fluid stream comprises a vacuum.

27. The method of Claim 14, further comprising the step of exposing the pant-like garment to a sufficient amount of heat to activate heat-activatable elastomeric material subsequent to pushing the opposing side panels into the body portion the first distance and prior to pushing the opposing side panels into the body portion the second distance.

28. Apparatus for tucking a pair of opposing side panels into a body portion of a pant-like garment, the apparatus comprising:

at least two consecutive stacker finger units, each stacker finger unit including at least one finger;

a vacuum delivered through the at least one finger on each of the stacker finger units; and

a tucking assembly.

29. The apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the tucking assembly comprises two opposing assemblies, each assembly including a plurality of paddles attached to a rotating carrier.

30. The apparatus of Claim 29, wherein the tucking assembly further comprises a cam track around which the carrier passes.

31. The apparatus of Claim 29, wherein the tucking assembly further comprises a cam track around which the plurality of paddles passes.

32. The apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the tucking assembly comprises a blade tucker.

33. The apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the tucking assembly comprises at least one fluid stream.

34. The apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the tucking assembly comprises a pair of opposing air blasts.

35. The apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the tucking assembly comprises a vacuum.